

# Congresswoman NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ

Representing New York's 12th Congressional District  
Ranking Democratic Member, House Small Business Committee



## Velázquez Bill Helps Welfare Families

Proposal would keep parents with children from being thrown off rolls

Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez last month introduced legislation to reform the welfare laws that are now beginning to eliminate families from City welfare rolls, right in the aftermath of September 11, a deepening recession, and major job losses.

The 1996 Welfare Reform Act mandated that families could receive federal assistance for no more than five years during a lifetime. It also revoked the rights of legal immigrants to receive welfare, even though their taxes support it.

December 1, 2001, was the five-year deadline that dropped 38,000 New York families from welfare.

The "Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Recipients Lifeline Act" would repeal the five-year limit on benefits, repeal restrictions on legal immigrants, require bilingual services and adjust aid for inflation.

"We cannot leave families with so little help at this time," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "We must act now."



Congresswoman Velázquez held a rally with FUREE and Make the Road By Walking to introduce her welfare reform bill with families facing the end of their benefits.

## Brooklyn Bridge Park Gets Federal Funds for Study

\$1,000,000 used to examine pedestrian access to East River waterfront



Congresswoman Velázquez secured \$1 million to study access routes to the Brooklyn Bridge Park, which is currently under development.

Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez secured \$1 million in a transportation appropriations bill to study ways to ensure greater access to the Brooklyn Bridge Park while reducing auto traffic to a minimum.

The park will be located at the foot of the Brooklyn Bridge, stretching over a mile from DUMBO to Atlantic Avenue, to create much needed public access to the waterfront. The waterfront park will provide Brooklyn residents with open and recreational space and draw visitors from other areas.

New York State has already committed \$85 million and the City \$65 million to the park's development. About \$400 million in private investment is anticipated. The park is expected to create more than 1,000 new jobs.

Alternative forms of transportation to increase the park's public use – including easier subway access via a pedestrian tunnel, bikes with greenway connections, electric trolleys, and jitney buses – are being discussed.

"Transportation and public access are key to the success of the park," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "This funding will help people get to the park in the most environmentally sensitive and cost-effective way."

# Major Education Bill Now Law

Provides more resources, requires more school accountability

President Bush signed into law the biggest changes in federal education policy in 40 years last month, requiring more accountability while providing more resources for public school to teach our young people.

The new law includes an amendment by Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez to allow schools to use “in-kind” donations of time and materials to qualify for after-school program federal matching funds.

The new law requires yearly testing in reading and math for every child in grade 3-8 beginning in 2005, with the goal of improving all students’ reading and math skills within 12 years and narrowing the performance gap between wealthy and low-income schools.

The law also requires schools to certify their teachers are qualified in their subject areas. If test scores do not improve, low-income students can transfer to other schools or receive tutoring.

Finally, the law lets Congress spend \$26.5 billion on public education and increases spending for the main program helping low-income schoolchildren.

“Everyone knows education is important for our chil-



Congresswoman Velázquez meets with schoolchildren during a visit to P.S. 145 last month.

dren,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “These new changes will help all students to achieve their potential.”

## Airbus 300 Safety Hearing Requested

Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez joined Rep. José Serrano to request a House Transportation Committee hearing on the safety of the Airbus 300 airliner, which was involved in the crash of American Airlines Flight 587 last year.

Flight 587 crashed shortly after takeoff from New York’s Kennedy Airport and plunged into the Rockaway section of Queens. All 260 people aboard the flight, which

was bound for Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic, perished including many constituents from the districts represented by Representatives Velázquez and Serrano.

The Airbus 300 has a history of problems, particularly with the rudder. Over the past 20 years, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has had reason to issue more than 600 airworthiness directives pertaining to various Airbus models.

## Velázquez Introduces Federal Retiree Law

Indexes savings for inflation, allows widowed spouses to get benefits

Last month Congresswoman Velázquez introduced a bill to reform parts of the federal employees retirement system.

The “Deferred Annuitant Fairness Act” would index for inflation money put away by government workers for their retirement, so it holds its value when they become eligible for the benefit at age 62. It would also require that the spouses of federal workers who die before reaching retirement are allowed to receive the benefit themselves.

three decades later, when it will be worth about \$400. That discourages workers from keeping money in the system, and punishes those who do.

Also, under the old Civil Service Retirement System, spouses of federal workers who die before retirement age cannot receive the benefit. Congresswoman Velázquez’s bill would change that, allowing the widowed spouse to collect the worker’s retirement benefit.



Currently, funds put away for retirement are not indexed for inflation. That means \$1,000 put away today will remain \$1,000 30 years from now, except that inflation has decreased its value



“It is important to treat everyone fairly,” Congresswoman Velázquez said.

### Grants Awarded to Our Community

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| Lutheran Medical Center.....\$5,586,706 | Bishop Ford Central High School.....\$5,497 |
| Grant for Health Center Cluster         | E-rate internet connection                  |